



Department of Commerce

Innovation is in our nature.

Brownfields

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SUBJECT: **Planned Actions**

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requires that potential impacts of development undergo a review by public officials prior to the approval of that development. Public officials use this information to eliminate or reduce any adverse impacts.

Cities and counties can expedite the development of brownfield sites by conducting this environmental assessment during their planning process. They can pre-determine likely impacts and the mitigation it will require. Subsequently, new developments do not need to repeat this process. This saves them both time and money.

The planning process typically consists of four steps.

1. Designate the boundaries of the subarea.
2. Conduct an environmental assessment that includes public notification and participation.
3. Determine the development regulations required to mitigate adverse environmental impacts or remove environmental hazards.
4. Draft a planned-action ordinance that outlines these requirements and development regulations.

In 2010 the Legislature amended RCW 43.21C.420 to include specific language about planned actions. It allows plan-level review of subarea plans that lead to up-front development conditions and mitigation requirements. Developments in these areas do not need additional SEPA review. Developments are also exempt from administrative or judicial appeals for noncompliance with SEPA.

Cities and counties that do planned-actions report a number of benefit; for instance,

- Increased certainty and predictability
- Time and cost savings for developers and cities
- Increased revenues, when used with other economic development tools
- Greater community engagement
- Cities that adopted planned actions already have done so again.

- Overall, the number of EISs and MDNSs dropped sharply since 1996 when the Legislation authorized planned actions ordinances.

Further Reading:

- Municipal Research Services Center, "[Planned Action](#)"
- Department of Commerce, Growth Management Services, [State Environmental Policy Act Case Studies](#)

For More Information:

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BROWNFIELDS REVOLVING LOAN FUND**

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